

## Early Sasanians' Claim to Achaemenid Heritage

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The purpose of this article is to examine once more the question of whether or not any memory of the Achaemenids had been preserved in the early Sasanian period.<sup>1</sup> The Middle Persian treatise *Kārnāmag I Artaxšīr I Pāpakān* (*History of Ardašīr son of Pāpak*)<sup>2</sup> is a little composition dating from the sixth-century and containing romantic accounts of the rise of Ardašīr, birth and growth of Šāpūr I and the early days of Hormazd I. That the extant work is taken from an older account is evident from the opening sentence: "The following is written in the *Kārnāmag* of Ardašīr son of Pāpak."<sup>3</sup> The introduction to the work informs us that "after the death of Alexander the Roman, there ruled in [what had been] the Empire of Iranians (*Ērānšahr*) 240 Petty Kings (*Kadağ X<sup>w</sup> adāyān*)"<sup>4</sup> of whom the Arsacids ruling over "Ispahān, Pārs and the neighboring regions" were the most prominent.<sup>5</sup> The story then recounts the rise of Ardašīr whose father Sāsān descended from Dārā son of Dārā, the vanquished opponent of Alexander. As the rightful inheritor of the ancient Persian kings, Ardašīr strove to restore their throne and empire. When translating this romance in 1878, Theodor Nöldeke commented on the designation "Alexander the Roman" as follows:<sup>6</sup>

I have no doubt that the Iranians had not kept any memory of their own from Alexander. All Iranian accounts of him (in Tabart, Etychius, Firdausi and so on) are derived from the Greek [Alexander] Romance (Pseudo-Callisthenes) ... It is decisive that Alexander in Pahlavi [literature] is likewise always has the epithet "the Roman". Therefore, the name [of Alexander] had become known to the

Iranians only after the Romans - not the Greeks or Macedonians - came to be their political and religious opponents. The Zoroastrian priests had then transferred their hatred for the Romans - and perhaps also their hatred for Christianity - to the person of Alexander and had made him the destroyer of their scripture.

In the same year Nöldeke published his exceedingly scholarly annotated translation of the portion of Ṭabarī's history which covers the Sasanians and their Arab contemporaries.<sup>7</sup> That account begins with the tracing of the ancestry of Ardašīr to Dārā son of Dārā son of Bahman son of Spandyār son of Goštāsp, the Kayanid patron of Zoroaster. According to Ṭabarī, Ardašīr:

Rose up in Persis pretending to seek revenge for the blood of Dārā, son of Dārā grandson of Spandyār, whom Alexander fought and whom two of his own chamberlains murdered. As he explained, Ardašīr wanted to restore the kingship to the legitimate family, and put it back exactly as it had been during the time of his forefathers who had lived before the Petty Kings, and to bring the empire back under one head and one king again.<sup>8</sup>

Here once more Nöldeke voiced the opinion that "as is well-known", the Iranian traditional history had no recollection of the Achaemenid history save for the name of the two Dārās, i.e., Darius, and what it recounts of the last Dārā and of Alexander is merely taken from the Greek Alexander Romance. Nöldeke further argued that since the Easterners considered the Seleucids and Arsacids as Petty Kings installed by Alexander to deprive the Iranians of unity, Ardašīr was now pretending to bring back the unity and organization of the ancient empire which Alexander had destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

Nöldeke's unrivalled mastery of the Iranian history and tradition was such that his opinion became canonized and vastly influenced later literature.<sup>10</sup> It received evident support when Nöldeke himself proved that the Greek version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander-Romance had been translated into Middle Persian in the last decades of the Sasanian period.<sup>11</sup> The Middle Persian version has not survived but a Syriac recension of it made in the same century has.<sup>12</sup> It does indeed seem to be the source of a good deal of Iranian traditions on Dārā and Alexander.<sup>13</sup>

Now, Nöldeke was a first class historian, well-familiar with Iranian and Sasanian-based sources and equally at home with classical scholarship. He knew the testimonies of three classical sources - two of them contemporaries of Ardašīr - which paralleled that of Ṭabarī. He must also have been familiar with yet another piece of analogous evidence, the statement in the *Letter of Tansar*.<sup>14</sup> Yet he chose to ignore them, regarding them as

later or unfounded. Subsequent scholars took notice, and found the parallelism too compelling. Here are the testimonies Herodian (Summary of LXXX 4.2):

[Ardašīr] boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient Persians had once held, as far as the Grecian Sea, claiming that all this was his rightful inheritance from his forefathers.

It must be emphasized that Dio's account has reached us only in a summary made by a near contemporary, Xiphilinus. The more detailed statements are found in Herodian. He gives the content of a report on Ardašīr's rise sent by the governors of Syria and Mesopotamia to the emperor Severus Alexander as follows (VI 2.2):

[Ardašīr] believing that the entire mainland facing Europe contained by the Aegean Sea and the Propontis Gulf (the whole of what is called Asia) belonged to him by ancestral right, he was intending to recover it for the Persian empire. He alleged that from the rule of Cyrus, who first made the Median empire subject to the Persians, up to Darius, the Last of the Persian kings, whose kingdom Alexander of Macedon had destroyed, the whole country as far as Ionia and Caria, had been under the government of Persian satraps. So it was his right to restore and reunite the whole empire as it had once been.

Herodian also attributes the following utterances to the Persian envoy (VI 4.5):

The Romans and their ruler must abandon Syria and the whole of Asia opposite Europe, allowing Persian rule to extend as far as Ionia and Caria and the peoples contained within the Aegean-Pontus seaboard. For these were the traditional possessions of Persians.

Zonaras (XII 15) also speaks of Ardašīr's threat "to recover all territories that belonged to the Persians from their ancestors". But this seems to be derived from Dio and Herodian and, therefore, of no independent value. That the memory of the Achaemenids was lingering on is also evidenced by the letter of Šāpūr II to the emperor Constantius (Ammianus Marcellinus XV 5.3-10):

I Shapur, King of Kings, partner with the Stars, brother of the Sun and Moon, to my brother Constantius Caesar offer most ample greeting. Since therefore the consideration of truth ought to be free and untrammelled, and it befits those in high station to speak as they feel, I shall state my proposal in brief terms, recalling that what I am about to say I have often repeated. That my forefathers' empire reached as far as the river Strymon and the boundaries of Macedonia even your own ancient records bear witness; these lands it is fitting that I should demand, since (and may what I say not seem arrogant) I surpass the kings of old in magnificence and array of conspicuous virtues.

Another contemporary of Šāpūr, the well-informed historian and orator Libanius, also cites Šāpūr's threat that he would prepare for war against the Romans more adequately than "his forefathers Darius and Xerxes had" in their campaign against the Greeks (*Oration* 59.65).

Quite independently of these we have the testimony of the *Letter of Tansar*,<sup>15</sup> a New Persian translation of a Sasanian treatise on statesmanship originally composed in the time of Ardašīr himself<sup>16</sup> and much amplified and embellished in the sixth-century,<sup>17</sup> gives the following testimony regarding the endeavors of Ardašīr:<sup>18</sup>

So today the King of kings has cast the shadow of his majesty over all who have acknowledged his pre-eminence and service and have sent him tribute, and has protected their borders from attack by his own men. Thereafter he shall devote all his thoughts to waging war on the Romans and pursue his quarrel against the people; and he will not rest till he has avenged Dārā from the Alexandrites (*tā kīna-yi Dārā nakhwāhad as Iskandariān*), and has replenished his coffers and the treasury of state, and has restored by the capture of descendants of his soldiers the cities which Alexander laid waste in Iran. And he will impose on them tribute such as they have ever paid our kings for the land of Egypt and Syria ...<sup>19</sup>

These testimonies seemed decisive. In the meantime, numismatists and art historians saw clear evidence of Ardašīr's familiarity with Achaemenid art, history and organization. The picture of Ardašīr, his brother Šāpūr and their father Pāpak were discovered engraved on the wall of the Harem of Xerxes in Persepolis, indicating the close connection they felt with that monument. Persepolitan sculptural and architectural patterns were discovered in the monuments of Ardašīr at Fīrūzābād or those of his son Šāpūr I in Bīšāpūr.<sup>20</sup> When the trilingual inscription of Šāpūr I on the walls of the Achaemenid tower wrongly known as the Ka'bah of Zoroaster was uncovered in the 1930s, remarkable thematic and ideological similarities between it and the trilingual inscription of Darius the Great at Behistun were revealed.<sup>21</sup> The Pahlavi inscription of Šāpūr Sakānšāh, a brother of Šāpūr II, on the north wall of the south portico of Darius' palace in Persepolis in which the prince prayed for the souls of the departed ancestors who had built "this *Sad-sitūn*" further confirmed the idea that the early Sasanians did remember their Achaemenid forebears.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the letter of Šāpūr II to Constantine was taken as evidence of the knowledge of "ancient records". It gradually seemed logical to consider the claim somewhat seriously<sup>23</sup> and regard the Sasanians as "the Heirs of the Achaemenids."<sup>24</sup>

Then in 1971 there appeared an article by Ehsan Yarshater entitled: "Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?" After a thorough investigation of the available

evidence Yarshater came to the conclusion that the answer must be negative. If there were heirs to the Achaemenids, they were the Arsacids. His reasonings were so well documented and persuasive that the article became a classic, and its ideas widely accepted<sup>25</sup> and - as one might expect - taken to the extreme by enthusiastic adherents<sup>26</sup> and misused by others not active in Sasanian studies.<sup>27</sup> Let us see his arguments:

1. That the Sasanians had not retained a memory of the Achaemenids is shown by the fact that their tradition knows nothing of Achaemenid history, not even the name of the founder of the dynasty Cyrus.<sup>28</sup> Instead, it attributes "their monuments to Jamshid, Rustam, Soloman and others."<sup>29</sup>

2. Achaemenid traditions (names such as Bagdāt, Artaxštar, Dāryāv/Darius and motifs such as fire altars, winged-man) were preserved in Persis "long after the conquest of Alexander"; but "there is no evidence that these elements lasted long enough to be transmitted to the Sasanian period, except in a small measure."<sup>30</sup>

3. "The myths and legends of western and southern Iran" (e.g., the birth and rise of Cyrus and the horse oracle on the accession of Darius) "also disappears from memory". If similarities are formed between those legends and the stories of Zāl and Kay Khosrow and Dārāb, they are "due to the recurrence of a pattern rather than the preservation of western traditions."<sup>31</sup>

4. The legends of the Kayanids and Pēšdādian kings had spread into western Iran already during the Achaemenid period. These were blended with the memory of the last days of the Persian empire and resulted in the inclusion of the names Ardašīr and Dārā in the list of the Kayanid kings.<sup>32</sup> Later came the association of Spandiyār and other Kayanids with western Iran. The Sasanian sources had given the place of the Achaemenid kings (whom they did not know) to the Kayanids.<sup>33</sup> Thus when they claimed heritage from the ancient Kings of Iran, they meant from the Kayanids - not from the Achaemenids. Herodian's mention of Cyrus and Darius as the ancestors claimed by Ardašīr is a mere Grecization: Ardašīr (and later Šāpūr II) would have referred to their royal ancestry, meaning the Kayanid kings, but Roman officials "amplified the references by pedantically inserting at least the name of Cyrus."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Herodian's assertion that Ardašīr claimed heritage from "Cyrus the king who first made the Median empire Persian" is a Roman fabrication, it "could hardly be attributed to the Persians of the Sasanian times."<sup>35</sup>

5. The Jews and Syriac scholars did preserve the memory of the Achaemenids and



even of Medes. But there is no evidence that the *Sasanian scholars* would have wished to use alien sources in their national history. Unlike them, however, Muslim scholars did.<sup>36</sup>

6. The Arsacids had already made claims to the heritage of ancient Persian kings. They had already shown Iranian "nationalism" against Roman aggression. They had already been good Zoroastrians. Close examination of the sources shows that Ardašīr was merely continuing the imperial policy of the Parthians. There was no question of a revolutionary trying to "restore" ancient Persian empire. It was a Persian prince trying to dethrone the Arsacids and rule as the successor to the Kayanid kings.<sup>37</sup>

The more one ponders on Yarshater's reasonings the more convinced one becomes of their soundness. His case is not strengthened by the speculations<sup>38</sup> that Herodian must have followed Dio and embellished his account so that we have merely *one* Roman testimony, that the *Letter of Tansar* is late, that Ammianus has fabricated - or altered - the letter of Šāpūr II. Nor does the argument<sup>39</sup> that the Jewish and Syrian authors knew of Cyrus and other Achaemenids and hailed Khosrow II as "a new Cyrus"<sup>40</sup> weakens Yarshater's case. Not only did he know of these parallel traditions within the Sasanian realm, he also anticipated the argument: these non-Iranian traditions have left no trace in Sasanian historiography.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Yarshater's arguments stand.

Yet there *are* indications that the *early Sasanians* did know of the Achaemenid history. These indications are as follows:

1. Mani called Ardašīr I Dārā-Ardašīr.<sup>42</sup> Now, we know that *all* of the Achaemenids since Xerxes bore the names Darius or Ardašīr.<sup>43</sup> The adoption of the double name must have been a conscious attempt at linking the Persian prince with the House of the Achaemenids.<sup>44</sup> That the name of Cyrus was not used is not decisive. Even during the Achaemenid period no *king* adopted it again.<sup>45</sup>

2. Ardašīr portrayed himself on the wall of the Harem of Xerxes and on the rock of Nagsh-i Rostam, not far from the monument of Darius and his tomb. He also adopted as the symbol of his authority a throne (depicted on the reverse of his coin) which copies the Achaemenid throne as known from Persepolis and the sculptured representation on the royal Achaemenid tombs.<sup>46</sup>

3. Some of Ardašīr's statements so closely recall the wordings of the inscriptions of Darius that it is impossible to assume mere coincidence, or to allege "oral traditions" - a device employed to absurdity in some recent studies of the Iranian ideologies and the *Šāh-nāma*. Thus we may compare a claim quoted from Ṭabarī

(above) with one of Darius the Great at Behistun. We put them side by side:

Darius:<sup>47</sup>

The kingdom which had been taken away from our family, that I put in its place; I reestablished it on its foundation ... As before, so I brought back what had been taken away.

Ardašīr:

Ardašīr wanted to restore the Kingship to the legitimate family, and put it back exactly as it had been during the time of his forefathers.

And on the question of God selecting the rightful King:

Darius:<sup>48</sup>

Saith Darius the King: Ahuramazda bestowed the kingdom upon me; Ahuramazda bore me aid until I got possession of this kingdom; by the favor of Ahuramazda I hold this kingdom.

Ardašīr:<sup>49</sup>

God has conferred upon me the crown I am wearing, and He is the one, too, who has made me King over the lands I have seized and has borne me aid in vanquishing Kings and rulers.

Mas'ūdī quotes<sup>50</sup> a piece of Ardašīr's inaugural speech which outlines his beliefs and aims:

Know ye that we shall strive to dispense justice, promote good deeds, preserve fine memorials, prosper lands, show affection to people, maintain what is good in the country and regain what has been taken from it. Rest assured, therefore, that my justice will affect both the mighty and the weak...

These words recall those of Darius the Great carved on his tomb at Naqš-e Rostam (DNb, 5-15):<sup>51</sup>

Proclaims Darius, the king: By the favour of Auramazdā I am such a kind that I am friendly to right, (but) I am not friendly to wrong. (It is) not my desire that the weak one might be treated wrongly for the strong one's sake, (and) that (is) not my desire that the strong one might be treated wrongly for the weak one's sake.

What (is) right, that (is) my desire. To the man following Falsehood I am not friendly. I am not hot-tempered. Whatever occurs to me in a quarrel, I firmly hold back in my thinking; I am firmly in control of myself.

Oral transmission of ideas alone is insufficient to account for such similarities, but the existence of Aramaic versions of the Achaemenid documents would explain them. Just as certain similarities between the statements of Darius the Great and those of Kanishka the Great have led to the belief that the Kushans might have used Aramaic

translations of Old Persian documents,<sup>52</sup> so can we argue (particularly in the light of what will be said below, under 4) that in Persis Aramaic documents could have been preserved and understood by scribes serving Persis kings and early Sasanians.

4. At the court of the early Sasanians, Greek was understood to the extent that royal inscriptions were composed trilingually: in Middle Persian, Parthian and Greek. Recent studies have demonstrated that the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform was also understood and copied well into the second century A.D.,<sup>53</sup> and that even in the third century A.D. there were still scholars who could understand "Chaldean" and write it in Greek alphabet.<sup>54</sup> Hence, Achaemenid documents in Aramaic or "Graeco-Babylonian" could have been available to the secretaries of Ardašīr I and Šāpūr I.

5. The silence of the Iranian "*National History*" compiled in the *sixth-seventh centuries* cannot be used as evidence for the ignorance of the *early Sasanians* of the Achaemenid history. For the same authorities who compiled the "*National History*" did not know Ardašīr's grandfather, had no knowledge of Kartīr and his activities, or of Narse's conflict with the supporter's of Bahrām Sakānšāh, and had very little knowledge of the wars of Šāpūr I with the Romans *all of which they could read in Pahlavi inscriptions and even see on the Naqsh-i Rostam and Pauikuli monuments*. When they neglected such *available sources* how can we expect them to remember Cyrus and Darius, Persepolis and Ecbatana? On the other hand, Ardašīr's imitation on his coins of the throne of Darius, his claims attested in Greek and Iranian sources, and his depiction of himself, his father and brother on the wall of the Harem of Xerxes at Persepolis, and Šāpūr I's copying (in the KZ inscription) of the format and thematic style of the Behistun inscription of Darius the Great, Šāpūr II's claim to the Achaemenid territory (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.5, 5), and his boasting according to Libanius that he would prepare for war against the Romans more adequately than "his forefathers Darius and Xerxes had" in their campaigns against Greeks, all suggest that the *early Sasanians* had a fair knowledge of their Achaemenid predecessors and had not yet mixed them up with the Kayanids.

6. On his investiture rock-reliefs, Ardašīr represented himself as the agent of God: Ahuramazda selected him and bestowed the kingship on him so that, in the words of *Dēnkard*: "His Majesty (*ōy bay*) Ardašīr King of Kings son of Pāpak *rose up for the restoration of the Iranian kingship (bāz ārāstārih Erān-xwadāth)*."<sup>55</sup> This "selection" was in fact long awaited. During the Achaemenid period, people had come to believe in a world history covering four empires: The Assyrian, the Mede, the Babylonian and the Persian, and their conviction was that the Persian empire would last forever. Alexander's conquest dashed this belief, and it then became a fervent hope of the



Iranians to "resurrect" the Persian empire. When the Romans succeeded the Macedonians, the Iranians predicted that soon "a Greek King" would rise up and reestablish the rulership of "Asia" ("Asia" was a synonym of the Persian empire).<sup>56</sup> The early third century A.D. saw the peak of such prophecies, and Ardašīr took advantage of that to represent himself as the restorer of Iranian kingship.

The foregoing discussion leads to one direction only: we must reconcile Yarshater's sound reasonings with the contradictory evidence adduced here. He is absolutely correct as far as the *later Sasanian chroniclers* are concerned, but it can no longer be denied that the *early Sasanians* did have some memory of the Achaemenids. This memory was lost with the rise of the "State Religion" under Šāpūr II in the following way. In the fourth century A.D. Zoroastrianism and Iranian sovereignty were threatened when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire. Now Roman Caesars were looked upon as the guardians of Christians everywhere, and Iranian Christians began siding with the enemy against their own sovereign.<sup>57</sup> Šāpūr II reacted<sup>58</sup> by promoting Zoroastrianism to the "State Religion"<sup>59</sup>. Henceforth the *mōbads* were the partners of the crown. To this clergy, the history of the past was what had been immortalized in the Yašts of the *Avestā*, namely, the legends of Pēšdādīān and Kayān kings, the last of whom was Kay Vištāsp, patron of Zoroaster. It became necessary for the scholar priests to create a link between Kay Vištāsp and Ardašīr I of the Sasanian house. Ardašīr's claim to the heritage of Dārā and Ardašīr (see above) furnished the evidence, and Kay Vištāsp was made the predecessor of an Ardašīr (=Bahman) who was the father of Dārā the Elder. This Dārā was then made the father both of Dārā whom Alexander vanquished as well as of Sāsān, the remote ancestor of Ardašīr I. Thus Ardašīr I had "risen up in Fārs to avenge the blood of his paternal cousin Dārā."

As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>60</sup> it was during the fourth and fifth centuries that the process of compiling the national history into a coherent account began:

Indeed from the fourth century, old names such as Zarēr, Kawād, Jāmāsp, Kāūs and Xusrau, began to be used by members of the Sasanian family. This and the fact that the ancient royal title Kavī (*KI* or *KDI*) appears on coins in addition to the usual Sasanian honorifics (e.g. *KDI YZDKRTI MLKAN MLKA* = Kai Yazdigard Šāhānšāh)<sup>61</sup>, both point to the currency or revival of the old stories.

By the time of Xusrau Anōšēravān the history of ancient Iran was definitely compiled in a coherent form and kept in the treasury as a national document.

This work, entitled *Xʿadāy-nāmag* "Book of Kings" was supplemented with account of later periods under Khosrow II and Yazdigard III, and became the main

source of all early Islamic histories on ancient Iran.<sup>62</sup> It was in this "National History" that there was no place for the Achaemenids.

### Notes

1. A summary of the case has already been given in my review of J. Wiesehofer, *Die 'dunklen Jahrhunderte' der Persis*, Munich (1994) in *BAI* n.s. 9 (1995) 272.
2. Tr. Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Artachšir i Pāpakān, aus dem Pehlevi übersetzt*, Göttingen (1878).
3. *Ibid.*, 35-36.
4. On the term see with reference A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed., Copenhagen (1944) 19.
5. Nöldeke, *op. cit.*, 36.
6. *Ibid.*, 36 n. 1.
7. *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari übersetzt*, Leiden (1879).
8. Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Joeje *et al.*, Leiden (1879-1901) I, 814 = Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser* 3.
9. *Ibid.*, 3 n. 1.
10. A. Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, Copenhagen (1931) 146-148; E. Yarshater, "Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?", *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Rome (1971) S 17-31; and most recently C. E. Bosworth tr., *The History of al-Tabarī IV* (1999) I n. 1.
11. Theodor Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans [Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, phil.-hist. Classe, Bd XXXVIII. 5]*, Vienna (1890) 11-24. See also the review of this work by Siegmund Fränkel in *ZDMG* XLV (1891) 309-321.
12. E. A. W. Budge ed. and tr., *The History of Alexander the Great. Being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, London (1889).
13. For details see my forthcoming article "Iranians and Alexander".
14. Ed. M. Mīnovī, *Nāma-yi Tansar*, Tehran (1313/1934) 42. By the time Nöldeke was revising his studies of ancient Iranian historical traditions in *Das iranische Nationalepos*, Leipzig (1920), the text of the *Letter of Tansar* had been published by J. Darmesteter in *JA* 1894, 185-250 (and a French translation by him in *ibid.*, 502-555). Yet Nöldeke showed no inclination to revise his views.
15. See the preceding note and the tr. by M. Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar*, Rome (1966) 65.
16. So Darmesteter, *op. cit.*, 196 and Boyce, *op. cit.*, 16-22. Despite objections raised by certain scholars, I accept Boyce's view that the core of the text goes back to the time of Ardašīr for three reasons. Firstly, as she has shown, it describes conditions and "reforms" which can only fit Ardašīr's time. Secondly, it attributes to Ardašīr the wish to regain Syria and Egypt (see n. 19), which only a contemporary of Ardašīr have understood. Thirdly, it has preserved a chronological notice which is found nowhere else and could only have come from a source contemporary with Ardašīr. It states that Ardašīr spent fourteen years

- in reestablishing order and unity. This is not the duration of his reign but, as Darmesteter saw (see Boyce, *op. cit.*, 67 n. 2) "the space of time needed by Ardašir to establish his domain over the different local rulers of the Parthian empire." Now we know that Ardašir spent 12 years in subduing local rulers before vanquishing Ardavān (Mas'ūdī, *Murāj al-Dhahab*, ed. Barbier de Meynard, Leiden, 1861, II, 161). His career had thus began in A.D. (224-12-) 212, and this is exactly 14 years before Ardašir's final victory over the Parthians and his capture of Ctesiphon in 226 (note that Agathias, IV, 24, places Ardašir's "accession [i.e. his Ctesiphon accession] in the 538th year of "Alexander" = Seleucid Era, which began on October 1, 226). The correctness of this interpretation is borne out by the statement (Mīnovī, 42 = Boyce, 65) that Ardašir was "about to embark on a war with Rome", which indeed opened shortly after his conquest of Ctesiphon.
17. This is the general view originating from J. Marquart and A. Christensen. See the introduction to Mīnovī's edition and Boyce's translation.
  18. Adapted from Boyce's translation, *op. cit.*, 65 = Mīnovī's ed. 42.
  19. Note the archaic tone and notion: it was still remembered that Syria and Egypt had once been part of the Persian empire. This claim does not appear in any other Sasanian source and is a unique mark of authenticity.
  20. For literature see Yarshater, *op. cit.*, 517-518.
  21. M. Sprengling, "From Kartir to Shahpuhr I", *AJSL* 57 (1940) 334-336, 338, 340; M. Rostovzeff, "Res Gestae divi Saporis and Dura", *Berytus* VIII (1943) 19. More recently some scholars are inclined to ascribe these Sasanian echoes of Achaemenid concepts to the persistence of oral tradition: P. O. Skjærve, "Thematic and Linguistic Parallels in Achaemenian and Sasanian inscriptions", *Acta Iranica* 25 [-Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce], Leiden (1985) 593-603; P. Huyse, "Noch einmal zu Parallelen zwischen Achaemeniden-und Sāsānideninschriften", *AMl* 23 (1990) 177-183.
  22. For discussion and references see A. Sh. Shahbazi, "From Pārsa to Taxt-e Jamšīd", *AMl* NF 10 (1977) 200-201.
  23. See Yarshater, "Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?", 519-520 for references.
  24. In his very readable work *The Heritage of Persia*, London (1962), R. N. Frye gave his account of the Sasanian empire the title "Heirs to the Achaemenids."
  25. See particularly G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran. An Essay on its Origin*, Rome (1989) 122, 136ff.; M. Grignaschi, "La Nihāyatul-arab [sic] fī ahbāri-l-Furs wa-l-'Arab et les siyaru Mulūki-l-'agam du Ps. Ibn-al-Muqaffā", *BEO* 26 (1973) 98-99; J. Wiesehofer, *Die 'dunklen Jahrhunderte' der Persis* 16 (with n. 20), 17-19, 21, 139; Kettenhofen, "Die Einforderung des Achämenidischerbes durch Ardašir: Eine Interpretation romana", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 15 (1984) 177-190; G. Schoeler, "Die 'Luge' in der nationalen Tradition Irans", *Annäherung an des Fremde*, ZDMG suppl. 11, Stuttgart (1998) 373-392. See also below, n. 28.
  26. Especially by Kettenhofen and Schoeler, see the objections by D. Frendo, "Sasanian Irredentism and the Foundation of Constantinople: Historical Truth and Historical Reality", *BAI* NS. 6 (1992); Shahbazi, *op. cit.*, 9 (1995) 271; J. Wiesehofer, "Iranische Ansprüche an Rom auf ehemals achämenidische Territorien", *AMl* 19 (1986) 175-185;

- G. Gnoli, "L'inscription de Šābuhr à la Ka'be-ye Zardošt et la propagande sassanide", *Histoire et cultes de l'Asie centrale préislamique*, Paris (1991) 57-61. See also n. 39.
27. E. g. M. Roaf, "Persepolitan echoes in Sasanian architecture: Did the Sasanians attempt to recreate the Achaemenid empire?" in V. Sarkhosh-Curtis *et al.* eds., *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia*, London (1998) 1-7.
28. Yarshater, *op. cit.*, 519-520.
29. *Ibid.*, 519.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 519-520. This point should not have been pressed since Achaemenid stories do reappear in Sasanian forms.
32. *Ibid.*, 526-527.
33. *Ibid.*, 521-526.
34. *Ibid.*, 525ff.
35. *Ibid.*, 525.
36. *Ibid.*, 520-523.
37. *Ibid.*, 525ff.
38. By Kettenhofen and Schoeler. See above, n. 26.
39. By T. Daryae, "National History or Kayanid History?: The Nature of Sasanid Zoroastrian Historiography", *Iranian Studies* 28 (1995) 129-141.
40. *Ibid.*, 132. The idea is, of course, much older: in *b. Zev* 19a, the Jewish exilarch Hun bar Nathan hails Yazdegerd I as a new Cyrus, explicitly referring to Isaiah 49. 22-3. But as Yarshater says, such Jewish awareness does not mean Sasanian awareness. Even less likely is the idea (Daryae, *op. cit.*, 132-133) that the Armenian historiography had preserved the memory of the Achaemenids. The few references to them are part of classicizing and scholarly pretenses of Moses Khorenats'i, an early *ninth* century historian whose use of classical Greek literature is well attested (see R. W. Thompson, *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians*, London and Cambridge, MA, 1978, 20-32). The references to the ancient history, the list of the Parthian kings, and the duration of their empire in Armenian historians (see Fr. Spiegel, *Eranische Altertumskunde* I, 730-737; III, 198ff.) clearly show that the Armenians had no *historical* memory of their Arsacid forefathers let alone of the remoter Achaemenids. For their confused story of Tigran and Cyrus see A. Sh. Shahbazi, "The Three Faces of Tigranes", *American Journal of Ancient History* 10 (1985) 124-136.
41. Yarshater, *op. cit.*, 524.
42. "Dariardaxar" in the Greek text of the "Cologn Mani Codex" which the editors rightly explained as representing \*Dārē-Ardaxšār from \*Darēv. Artaxšīr = Dārā Ardašīr, and took as an indication of Ardašīr's claim to Achaemenid ancestry; see A. Heinrichs-L. Koenen, "Der Kölner Mani-Kodex ...", *Zeitschrift für Papyriologie und Epigraphik* 19 (1975) 21, 121 n. 53. See also W. Sundermann, "Studien zur kirchengeschichtlichen Literatur der iranischen Manichäer II", *Altorientalische Forschungen* 13 (1986) 293.
43. Artaxšaθra > Artaxerxes/Ardašīr meant "whose reign is through Arta [divinity of order based on truth]". Diodorus Siculus XV 93.1 testifies that the rule of the first Artaxerxes



- was deemed so beneficent that the Persian kings adopted his as their "throne names".
44. As I have demonstrated elsewhere ("The 'Traditional date of Zoroaster' explained", *BSOAS*, 1977, 33-34) the regnal years of all Achaemenid kings are added up to make a long year attributed to Ardašīr-Bahman while the 26 years of Darius II and III are divided between Dārā the elder and Dārā the Last. The interesting questions on Dārā's raised by P. O. Skjærve, "The Joy of the Cup: A Pre-Sasanian Middle Persian Inscription on a Silver Bowl", *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, vol. 11, requires a separate article.
  45. The statement of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquity* XI 6.1 that Artaxerxes I was originally called Cyrus is contradicted by a contemporary Babylonian document which calls him Aršu = Arses; see A. J. Sachs and H. Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia* I, Vienna (1988) 59, 61.
  46. On the figures see P. Calmeyer, "Synarchie", *AMI* NF 9 (1976) 63ff. On the throne imitation see particularly I. Pfeiffer, "Der throne der Achaimeniden als Herrschaftssymbol auf sasanidischen Münzen", *Schweizer Münzblätter* 23 (1973) 107ff.
  47. Darius, Behistun, Old Persian version, Col. I, 62ff. in R. G. Kent, *Old Persian*, 2nd ed., New Haven (1953) 120.
  48. Behistun, Col. I, 24-26 (= Kent, *op. cit.*, 119).
  49. From Ardašīr's letter to Ardavān in *Ṭabarī* I, 818.
  50. *Murūj* II.
  51. The translation is that of R. Schmidt, *The Old Persian Inscriptions of Naqsh-e Rostam and Persepolis* (CII. Pt I, vol. I, Text II), London (2000) 40.
  52. Nicholas Sims-Williams in N. Sims-Williams - Joe Cribb, "A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great", in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/96) 83: "It is not inconceivable that both Kushans and Sasanians may have had direct knowledge of the content of Darius' inscription, presumably through an Aramaic version such as that found at Elephantine."
  53. M. J. Geller, "The Last Wedge", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 87 (1997) 45ff.
  54. *Ibid.*, 49ff.
  55. M. Shaki, "The Dēnkard Account of the History of the Zoroastrian Scripture", *Archiv Orientalni* 49 (1981) 115, 118.
  56. For discussion and references see M. Boyce, F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism* III (1991) 12-14, 371ff.
  57. T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia", *Journal of the Roman Studies* 75 (1985) 126-136.
  58. Christensen, *L'Iran sous le sassanides*, 250.
  59. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrian Religion", in E. Yarshater ed., *Cambridge History of Iran* III, 886-887.
  60. "On the X<sup>th</sup> adōy-nāmag", in *Acta Iranica* 30 [= *Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater*], Leiden (1990) 214 (with references at 226).
  61. For the title "Kayān" as the surname of the Sasanians see *Šahnāma* VIII 31 v. 347; 32 v. 364.
  62. For a detailed study on the name, date, contents and composition method of the X<sup>th</sup> adōy-nāmag see Shakhbazi, *op. cit.*, 208-220.